

INTEGRATION AND THE CHRISTIAN SCHOLAR

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SUMMARY

In this article, J.P. Moreland outlines the various ways Christian scholars integrate their faith and academic pursuits.

ASSESSING THE TEXT

As St. Augustine wisely asserted, "We must show our Scriptures not to be in conflict with whatever [our critics] can demonstrate about the nature of things from reliable sources."

How can we do this without compromising Scripture or our academic values?

Which do you struggle most to maintain in balance? Your Christian beliefs or your academic ones?

To begin with, there is a widespread hunger throughout our culture for genuine, life-transforming spirituality.

Based on your experience with non-Christians around you, do you think this is true? Why or why not?

The Christian integrator holds to and teaches the same beliefs about his/her subject matter that non-Christians accept but goes on to add praise to God for the subject matter.

How can you practically add praise to God in serious study of your subject matter?

Beliefs are the rails upon which our lives run. We almost always act according to what we really believe. It doesn't matter much what we say we believe or what we want others to think we believe.

What beliefs do your everyday actions most portray?

Do your actions portray something you don't intellectually really believe? Something you don't want to portray? What are they?

A person's plausibility structure is the set of ideas the person either is or is not willing to entertain as possibly true. For example, no one would come to a lecture defending a flat earth because this idea is just not part of our plausibility structure.

How can you practically broaden a person's plausibility structure to become more accepting of Christ?

Indeed, ethical and religious claims are frequently placed into what Francis Schaeffer used to call the upper story, and they are judged to have little or no epistemic authority, especially compared to the authority given to science to define the limits of knowledge and reality in those same institutions.

Given the academic world's high view of science and low view of religious values, what steps can be taken to raise the credibility of the Christian faith?

What actions should one avoid that might hamper that effort?

The word "integration" means to form or blend into a whole, to unite. The human intellect naturally seeks to find the unity that is behind diversity and, in fact, coherence is an important mark of rationality.

What makes this task of integration so difficult for many Christians within the academy?

Models Employed in Integration

- 1. *The Two Realms View.*** Propositions, theories, or methodologies in theology and another discipline may involve two distinct, non-overlapping areas of investigation.
- 2. *The Complementarity View.*** Propositions, theories, or methodologies in theology and another discipline may involve two different, complementary, non-interacting approaches to the same reality.
- 3. *The Direct Interaction View.*** Propositions, theories, or methodologies in theology and another discipline may directly interact in such a way that either one area of study offers rational support for the other or one area of study raises rational difficulties for the other.
- 4. *The Presuppositions View.*** Theology tends to support the presuppositions of another discipline and vice versa.
- 5. *The Practical Application View.*** Theology fills out and adds details to general principles in another discipline and vice versa, and theology helps one practically apply principles in another discipline and vice versa.

What are the strengths and weaknesses of each of these models?

Which model best fits practically within your discipline?

Which model do you most readily gravitate towards? Why?